The e-Visa system for AL 1 countries has been operating since 2002 and around 90% of students from these countries use e-Visa. Australia is anticipating that students from AL 2, 3 and 4 countries will also embrace the e-Visa as well.

Around 13,300 students visas have been granted to Indian students from 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005, which is around 20% more than the previous year. A large part of this increase (3,315) has been students applying for a further student visa in Australia to complete a course or to start a new course, after completing their first course. The number of new initial student visas granted to students before they leave home has increased around 4% this year. Australia expects that the numbers of Indian students will continue to increase, but probably not at the levels experienced in past years. As on 31 March 2005, there were around 17,600 Indian students in Australia.

Formation of Group-4 for UNSC Seat

385. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India, Brazil, Japan and Germany have formed a new group namely "Group of 4" to ensure permanent seats for themselves in the expanded Security Council; and

(b) if so, what steps are proposed to be taken in this direction in view of the reservation of some of the influential nations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) and (b) India, Brazil, Germany and Japan — now being termed as the Group of Four (G-4) countries — have introduced a Resolution on UN Security Council Reform on July 11, 2005 in the UN General Assembly. The G-4 Resolution, calls for an expansion of the UN Security Council from the present 15 to a total of 25 members, by adding 6 new permanent members and 4 new non-permanent seats. The G-4 Resolution is the result of intense consultations with member-States. While taking into account the various views, the G-4 resolution aims at securing the widest possible support of the UN membership. In this context, discussions between the G-4 and the African Union are currently underway.